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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 000565

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SUBJECT: BURUNDI FORMER MINISTER ADVOCATES RADJABU'S
RELEASE

REF: BUJUMBURA 521

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia Moller for reasons 1.4b and d.

11. (SBU) Summary: In a meeting on August 6, National Council for the Defense of Democracy - Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party member and former Minister of Commerce and Industry Jean Bigirimana claimed that the political malaise plaguing Burundi's government can be alleviated through the release of former CNDD-FDD party leader, Hussein Radjabu. Bigirimana asserted that the impasse in the government's political impasse is a direct result of the ruling party's decision to oust Radjabu as head of the CNDD-FDD at the party congress which took place in Ngozi on February 7. The staunch Radjabu ally declared that Radjabu is misunderstood and is innocent of many of the crimes currently alleged against him. He asked the U.S. to exert pressure on the government of Burundi to release Radjabu from prison. Bigirimana accused President Pierre Nkurunziza's government of violating CNDD-FDD party rules, skirting the constitution, and fomenting fear among civil servants at all levels of government which Bigirimana claims is a direct cause of rampant corruption and embezzlement. Bigirimana suggested that Burundi adopt morality reforms to help screen candidates seeking government positions and to monitor those members in office. End Summary.

12. (SBU) A staunch ally of former CNDD-FDD party leader Hussein Radjabu, Jean Bigirimana, the leader of Bujumbura's CNDD-FDD party, offered his opinions concerning Burundi's political quagmire to Ambassador Moller on August 6. Bigirimana described the political situation as 'worsening' and directly attributed the government's woes to the ouster of Radjabu as CNDD-FDD party president at the congress in Ngozi on February 7 and his current incarceration in Bujumbura's Mpimba Central prison. He complained that the government of Burundi (GOB) is wrongly blaming Radjabu for many of the scandals plaguing the nation, including the sale of the presidential jet (reftel.) and the extrajudicial killings in Muyinga in 2006. In support of his complaint, he stated that the World Bank's analysis of the sale of the plane, and the military court's findings pertaining to the killings are proof that Radjabu is being jailed illegally. Bigirimana claimed that releasing Radjabu from jail is the only way to move the country forward. The former minister also commented that political observers and the GOB accused Radjabu, as head of the ruling party, of managing the government's affairs like a one party state by requiring officials, regardless of party affiliation, support the politics of the ruling party or risk losing their positions. On the contrary, countered Bigirimana, it is the habit of Burundians to flock to a winner.

¶3. (C) According to Bigirimana, President Nkurunziza and his government have no respect for the law or Burundi's constitution. Without being specific, he suggested that the current administration was 'breaking rules' in other areas as well. Bigirimana surmised that the lack of progress in the National Assembly is a tactic being used by the legislature to compel Nkurunziza to respect the constitution. Bigirimana added that the current blockage of progress can not only be seen in Burundi's National Assembly but also out in the communities, where he claimed more than 80% of local governments were not operating properly. In support of this statement, he accused Nkurunziza's administration of sacking civil servants who showed any support for former CNDD-FDD party head Radjabu, or to the major opposition party, the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU). Bigirimana attributed the rampant corruption and the reluctance to work together in the spirit of goodwill at all levels of government as a by-product of a prevailing fear of losing influential positions due to suspected disloyalty to the current regime. To combat corruption, Bigirimana suggested that Burundi adopt institutional and morality reforms aimed at investigating and monitoring the actions of current and prospective civil servants.

¶4. (C) Comment: Although credible and hard-working during his tenure as Minister of Finance, Bigirimana obviously arrived at the meeting with an agenda focused solely on finding support for the release of his friend and ally, Hussein Radjabu. While Bigirimana spoke candidly on the need for dialogue between the political factions and President Nkurunziza, he made it clear that he believed the actions of Nkurunziza and his government were illegal, unproductive and unsupported by his faction of the CNDD-FDD, and that the only path to resolution was through political involvement of

Radjabu. Due to Radjabu's perceived betrayal by his party, some political observers speculate that Radjabu is spearheading the creation of a new political party. Bigirimana's highly scripted presentation, fervently advocating for Radjabu's release, may suggest that instead Radjabu's ultimate intent is to accelerate Nkurunziza's demise by splitting the ruling CNDD-FDD party. End Comment.
MOLLER